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# CLOSING THE OPEN DOOR

BY GEORGE BRONSON REA

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IF America desires to participate in the development of China's resources, we must invest our capital through Japanese intermediaries, permit Japanese managers to direct the enterprises, and Japanese engineers, foremen and other technical and skilled assistants to supervise them during construction and after completion.—This, in brief, is the new doctrine laid down by Japan for this nation to follow in China. Unless we accept its provisions, we are warned by Baron Shibusawa that “our activities in the Chinese market might lead to hostile competition, mutual distrust and bitter animosity which may be mutually disastrous.”

After two months spent in this country preaching the new doctrine, Baron Shibusawa returned to Japan in January and proclaimed to his people that his mission had been a success, and that American financiers had pledged themselves to co-operate through Japan in the “peaceful exploitation” of China. Careful investigation, however, among the leading financiers of Wall Street, reveals the fact that no such pledge was ever given. The announcement was emphatically made that American financiers would never endorse any doctrine which impaired the rights of the Chinese Government, ignored the rights of the Chinese to participate in the development of their own country, or undermined the policy of the American Government proclaimed in the Note of May 16 last to the Governments of China and Japan.

The issues between the two nations are therefore intensified by this latest development and must sooner or later compel a reopening of questions that have long been left quiescent by the Administration and the press of this country. These issues involve the independence of the Republic of China, and the right of Japan to exercise a dominant influ-

ence over the political and commercial affairs of this peaceful nation. Japan has declared a super-Monroe doctrine over Eastern Asia (under which the Philippines would immediately fall if cast adrift by this country) based on the theory that the independence of China is menaced by some imaginary Western Power, and that to protect her own independence, she, Japan, must exercise control over the affairs of her larger but weaker neighbor. This doctrine of paramount political interest is now reinforced, as far as the United States is concerned, by the declaration that Japan must exercise supreme commercial control over future Chinese industrial developments. Unless the United States is prepared to accept this interference with its treaty rights, the alternative has been made very clear to us by Baron Shibusawa and the official Japanese publicists in this country. The result will be "disastrous." In plain words, it may lead to hostilities.

Is Japan's position justified? Is China's independence threatened, and, if so, by what Power? Before any discussion of these questions is possible, it is essential that certain facts be made perfectly clear, facts that will prove without the shadow of doubt that China's independence and neutrality are guaranteed through a series of interlocking conventions before which the agreement to respect the independence of Belgium fades into insignificance.

The integrity of China is guarded by four treaties, and it is of interest to note that Japan is a party to each, therefore binding herself four times over to respect the independence of her neighbor.

In chronological order these treaties are:

1. The Franco-Japanese Agreement of June, 1907; 2. The Russo-Japanese Convention of July, 1907; 3. The Root-Takahira Agreement of November, 1908; and 4. The Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance of July, 1911.

The wording of the portion of these instruments relating to the preservation of the independence of China is almost identical, as will be seen from the following extracts:

*Franco-Japanese Agreement:* The Governments of Japan and France, being agreed to respect the independence and integrity of China, as well as the principle of equal treatment in that country for the commerce and subjects of citizens of all nations . . . engage to support each other for assuring the peace and security in those regions, with a view to maintain the respective situation and

the territorial rights of the two High Contracting Parties in the Continent of Asia.

*Russo-Japanese Convention:* The two High Contracting Parties agree to recognize the independence and the territorial integrity of the Chinese Empire, and the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in the said Empire, and they engage to uphold and defend the maintenance of the *status quo* and the respect of that principle by all the peaceful means possible to them.

*Root-Takahira Agreement:* They [America and Japan] are also determined to preserve the common interests of the Powers in China by supporting by all pacific means at their disposal the independence and integrity of China, and the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in that Empire.

*Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance:* The preservation of the common interests of all Powers in China by insuring the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire and the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in China. (Object B.).

There is a strong family likeness to be discerned in these solemn engagements. The importance (in the interests of the Powers themselves) of maintaining the independence of China is fully recognized. It is the cornerstone of Far Eastern diplomacy. In addition to the above citations of international law as applied to China it is also important to invite special attention to the following clause of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty between Russia and Japan:

*Treaty of Peace Between Japan and Russia:* Article III. The Imperial Government of Russia declare that they have not in Manchuria any territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in impairment of Chinese sovereignty or inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity.

Article IV: Japan and Russia reciprocally agree not to obstruct any general measures common to all countries, which China may take for the development of the commerce and industry of Manchuria.

To the above guarantees for the preservation of China's administrative and territorial integrity, must be added the pledges given to the American Government, by France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and Russia, to adhere to the commercial policy of the Open Door, conceding the right of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in China. The principle underlying the Open Door is based on the complete recognition of China's administra-

tive independence, and the undisturbed application of the Chinese treaty tariff, levied and collected by the Chinese Government. As explained by Mr. Choate, our Ambassador to Great Britain, in his Note to Lord Salisbury:

It is the sincere desire of my Government that the interests of its citizens may not be prejudiced through exclusive treatment by any of the controlling Powers within their respective "spheres of interests" in China, and it hopes . . . to remove dangerous sources of international irritation, and thereby hasten united action of the Powers at Peking to promote administrative reforms so greatly needed for *strengthening the Imperial Government and maintaining the integrity of China, etc.*"

In subscribing to the doctrine of the Open Door, the Governments of France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and Russia, therefore, entered into a solemn agreement with the Government of the United States to respect not only the principle of equal opportunity but the independence of China on which the principle is based.

It will be seen that the only great Power with whom Japan has not entered into any special agreement to respect and maintain the independence of China is Germany. But it is well to remember that until recent years, Germany and Great Britain were partners in the exploitation of China under an agreement between their official financial groups, approved by their respective foreign offices. It is also well to recall that the Governments of Germany and Great Britain entered into an agreement signed at London on October 16, 1900, to defend the integrity of China:

*British-German Agreement:* (2) Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Imperial German Government will not, on their part, make use of the present complication to obtain for themselves any territorial advantages in Chinese dominions, and will direct their policy toward maintaining undiminished the territorial condition of the Chinese Empire.

(3) In case of another Power making use of the complications in China in order to obtain under any form whatever such territorial advantages the two contracting parties reserve to themselves to come to a preliminary understanding as to the eventual steps to be taken for the protection of their own interests in China.

The independence of China and the rights of all Powers to equal opportunity in that country would seem to be adequately guaranteed. Japan is a party to the most important covenants. If Japan now proclaims that these guarantees

are worthless, and that it becomes her duty to exercise paramount control over China by the declaration of an Oriental Monroe Doctrine, she announces to the world that the United States and the Powers of Europe can not be trusted to live up to their agreements. The pretension of Japan that her political and commercial interests in China are paramount and must be acknowledged by America would seem to be a clean-cut violation of all treaties and an imputation of bad faith against all the Powers who have solemnly pledged their honor to respect the independence of China. Japan's new doctrine, therefore, isolates her from the family of nations, and creates an issue that will have to be faced as soon as the Powers have time to devote to their interests in that part of the world.

The issues involved in the maintenance of China's independence and the preservation of the doctrine of equal opportunity have a direct bearing on the future peace in this country. Japan's policy of aggression towards her weaker neighbor at a time when no one can interfere creates another focus of international trouble which bodes ill for the peace of the Pacific.

Since the day when President Wilson penned his first "strict accountability" note to Germany, the attention of the nation has been focused on the tremendous drama being enacted on the stage of Europe. International law has almost ceased to exist. Solemn treaties and covenants underlying the existing code have been ruthlessly violated. Might reigns supreme. Thanks to widespread and intelligent publicity, these issues are clean-cut and comprehensible to the people of America.

Similar issues have arisen in the Pacific, but no voice is raised to warn the nation of their import. A seeming conspiracy of silence, of criminal indifference and childlike incredulity, operates to conceal the truth from the public; and the nation drifts onward to its peril. As Germany's armed might riveted the shackles of bondage on unoffending Belgium, so has the great Oriental military Power violated her pledges and sought to fasten the yoke of her imperialism upon unprotected China. The destruction of Belgium finds its counterpart in the rape of China, but the threat of dire punishment prevents the full truth from being proclaimed to the world by the defenseless victims of Oriental aggression. No Chinese official dares lift his voice in protest against the

violation of his country. The feeble cries of outraged China are drowned amidst the uproar of the mighty conflict of giants in Europe; the vociferous protestations of Japan that she is protecting her own honor (through the dishonor of her victim) distracts attention from the accomplished deed.

On January 18 of last year, the Japanese Minister at Peking presented twenty-one demands on the President of China, which, if accepted in full, would have converted China into a vassal state of the Mikado. These demands violated every principle that Japan's allies were fighting to maintain in Europe. Every argument advanced by Great Britain to justify her entrance into the war against Germany applies with equal force against Japan. There was no provocation; no justifiable pretext. Japan's independence was not threatened. Taking advantage of the life and death struggle in Europe, Japan stood forth in her "shining armor" and gratified her lust for power on her innocent and unprotected neighbor.

The Open Door policy was converted into waste paper; the basis of Japan's alliance with Great Britain was discredited and destroyed; the solemn promises embraced within the provisions of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty to respect the rights of China in Manchuria were publicly scouted, and other equally binding compacts were as indifferently set aside. The European signatories to the treaties were busy fighting for their own lives, and the one Government which could protest was dominated by the arch-priest of pacifism, who, on previous occasions, had tacitly acquiesced in Japan's interpretation of her mission in China.

The hour that Japan had patiently waited for had struck; the "opportunity which would one day surely come in the Orient" — Viscount Hayashi's prediction — had arrived. Japan, in her strength, could do as she pleased, and, if necessary, "put meddling Powers in their places." "She had waited long, preparing against the day of opportunity," and, when it dawned, she threw off the mask, worn merely in order to lull the suspicions of the world, and boldly followed in the footsteps of Germany by repudiating her solemn pledges to maintain the *status quo* in China. Strong pressure was brought to bear in order to prevent the truth from leaking out. All the resources of secret diplomacy and government-controlled sources of news were manipulated to

conceal the facts. Slowly, very slowly, however, the truth percolated through the meshes of the censorship. As fact after fact was disclosed to an amazed and unbelieving world, Japan denied and denied, until concealment was no longer possible. Then, and only then, after the accomplished fact, did she admit the truth as to the twenty-one demands, and sought to justify her attitude by classifying the vital demands as only "wishes" or "desires." But these "desires" are on record, and the threat hangs over China that they are to be revived at some future time; or, in other words, they will be transformed into demands when Japan, in her opinion, decides that the opportune time has again arrived. Last year Japan was caught in the act; the process of lulling the suspicions of the world is now being repeated all over again.

The truth concerning the number, nature and scope of the demands was repeatedly brought to the attention of President Wilson and the then Secretary of State, Mr. Bryan, but not until the eleventh hour did the American Government place its position on record. As in the case of Belgium, there was no protest against the violation of international law. There was no publicity. The American Note to China and Japan was not handed out to the newspaper correspondents at Washington for publication in the papers of this country. The American people would have remained in total ignorance of this act of their Government had not a wide-awake English correspondent at Peking cabled it in full to the London *Daily Telegraph*. Its subsequent publication by one newspaper in this country aroused temporary curiosity; and, one month after the note was dispatched, it was finally corroborated by the American correspondent stationed at Peking.

This one incident is typical of the secrecy surrounding the policy of the Administration towards the issues in the Pacific. Prior to this and for some time afterwards (until the policy of the State Department in this particular was revised) every note to the European Powers was immediately handed to the press, but wild horses cannot drag from the State Department any information concerning the greater issues involved in the disputes with Japan. It is significant that even the American news services failed to perform their functions at this critical juncture. What influences operated to prevent this important note finding



its way promptly into the columns of the newspapers? Even after its publication in this country, there were no editorial comments—absolutely no intelligent discussion. It was immediately forgotten. It is well to recall its exact wording:

In view of the circumstances of the negotiations which have taken place or which are now pending between the Government of China and the Government of Japan and the agreements which have been reached and as a result thereof, the Government of the United States has the honor to notify the Government of the Chinese Republic that it cannot recognize any agreement or undertaking which has been entered into, or which may be entered into between the Governments of China and Japan impairing the treaty rights of the United States and its citizens in China, the political or territorial integrity of the Republic of China, or the international policy commonly known as the Open Door policy.

An identical note was handed to the Japanese Government through the American Legation at Tokio.

This is clear and to the point. It places our Government on record as asserting that the United States will not recognize any impairment of international law as applied to China. In effect it is almost another "strict accountability" note; and as events proved, it had as little effect in deterring Japan from her course in China: as Germany disregarded the submarine note, so Japan politely ignored our right to interfere in China. Her army and navy were mobilized for war. Her fleet was in Chinese waters, cleared for action. Her forces in China had been doubled under the pretext of relieving the garrisons already stationed in China. No one could interfere. America was the only Power which could object. But a Higher Power intervened on behalf of Japan. The Great Buddha providentially came to the assistance of his chosen people, and caused a warship accidentally to run her nose into the soft mud of Turtle Bay in Southern California, providing the excuse for the assembling there of a Japanese squadron with colliers, repair and supply ships. A temporary advanced naval base was established between San Diego and the Panama Canal, superior to the American naval force at that time in the Pacific, for the legitimate purpose of protecting the salvage work. It was all perfectly correct and proper. Providence took the place of strategy on behalf of Japan, and during all the time that the negotiations were proceeding in Peking, a Japanese fleet was secretly ensconced within striking dis-

tance of the vulnerable coasts of the only nation which might intervene or protest. It was simply accident. We must accept Japan's explanation. But we must remember that Count Okuma told his people at that time that "diplomacy to be successful must be backed up by force." When weak and unprepared America attempted to preserve adherence to the accepted tenets of international law in China by the dispatch of another diplomatic note, the Premier of Japan smiled and proceeded to make China pay.

The American Note bore the date of May 16. One week later, with this warning before her, Japan compelled China to sign two treaties and exchange fourteen notes, which did impair the rights of America in China, circumscribed the rights of American citizens to do business with the Chinese Government, annulled two valuable American contracts with the sovereign state of China, deprived the Chinese Government of its political and administrative independence in two provinces, and, by reverting to the "Spheres of Interest" doctrine in Manchuria, Eastern Inner Mongolia, Shantung and Fukien, repudiated the policy commonly known as the Open Door policy. The American Government has placed itself on record that it cannot recognize these impairments of the treaties. The issue is clear.

America may never go to war in defense of these principles of international law as applied to far-off China. All the great Powers have declared their adhesion to the Open Door doctrine, and are bound by a series of interlocking treaties, conventions and understandings to respect the territorial and political integrity of China. While these Powers are engaged in a life and death struggle for the maintenance of their own independence, one of the signatories to the treaties (in pursuit of purely selfish aims) has broken through the ringed fence of international agreements. Might makes right; and, while this situation exists, America can only place herself on record as refusing to countenance or recognize the violation of principles in China to which all Powers have equally subscribed and which they have pledged themselves to uphold.

The fundamentals of international morality on which the future peace of the world must rest are now being ground into powder between the millstones of military expediency. If the sanctity of treaties is to be replaced in the future by the will of the strongest, there can be no peace. If, there-

fore, after the war in Europe, the Christian Powers acquiesce in Japan's spoliation of China; if the binding power of solemn covenants, alliances and other agreements does not apply where the rights of this defenseless and pacific nation are concerned; if meekness and righteousness, based on justice, are to be made the sport of armed force; if might is to be right, the future of America is clearly foreshadowed. For, as defenseless China, through her acceptance of the doctrines of pacifism inculcated in the spirit of the people through centuries of domination by the literati, passes under the yoke of the stronger military Power; so, too, in time, will the days of our pacific Republic be numbered, and (as Count Okuma was good enough to advise us) "we will be governed by those who have mended our ways."

If the Open Door doctrine, subscribed to by all the great Powers of the world, is powerless to save China; if treaties, conventions, protocols, understandings and alliances based on the preservation of China's independence are utterly worthless; if the defenseless nation is still considered as the prize of her two neighbors, America may well ask herself how she is to maintain the Monroe Doctrine when the strong-armed nations of the world, on conquest bent, laugh at our unsupported pretensions. And, if China goes under without a protest from America, if Europe stands idly by and acquiesces in Japan's demands, just so surely will the Monroe Doctrine be put to the test later, and unless we are prepared, it will be too late. There is only one alternative: America must arm, and arm rapidly. We must stop talking, and prepare to fight for our life.

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